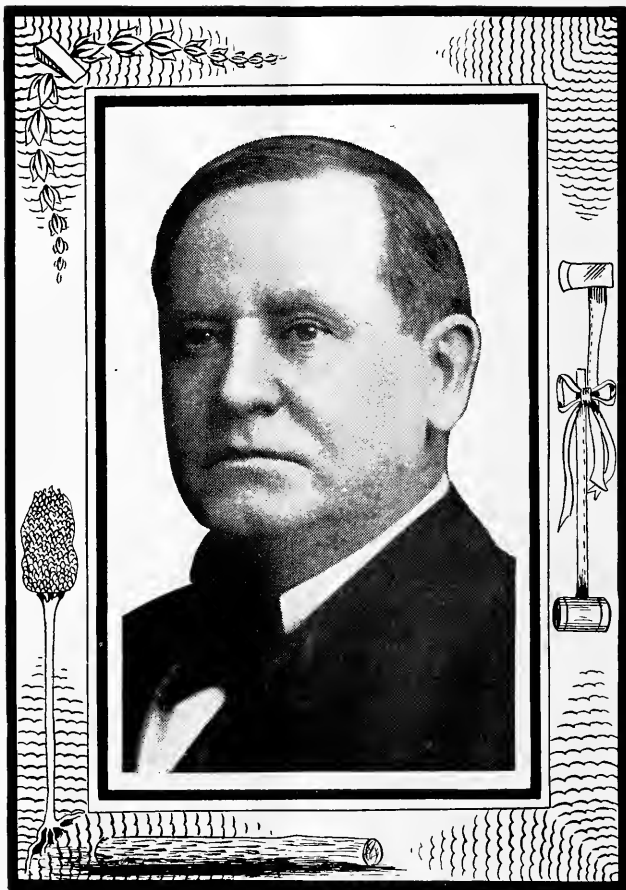


Northcott

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For
Honorable Daniel Fish

LINCOLN



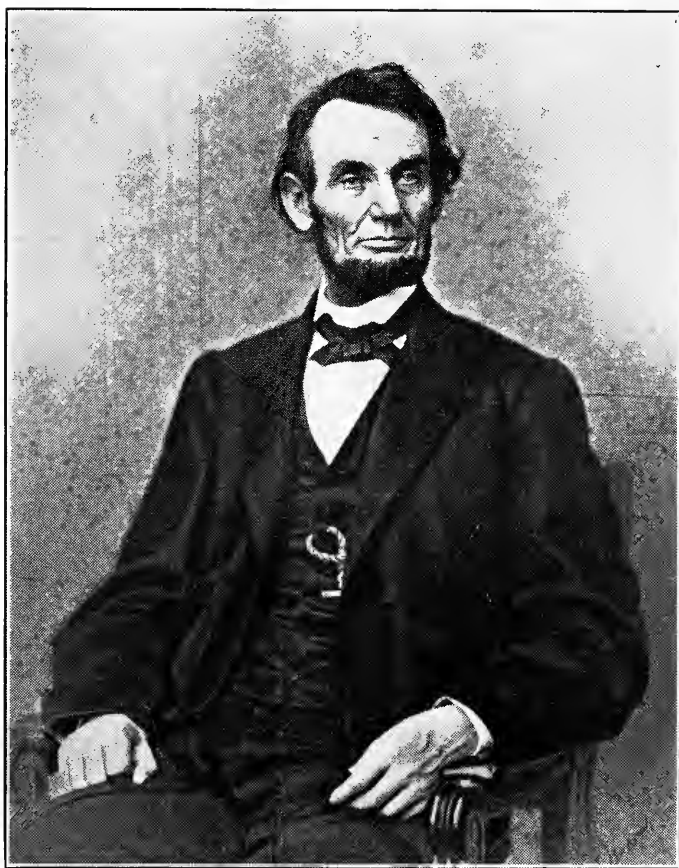
Past Head Consul W. A. Northcott.

Address written by the late Past Head Consul, W. A. Northcott of Springfield, Illinois, for delivery at this session of the Illinois Woodmen Social Club, at Chicago, Illinois, February 12, 1917.

Compliments of The
Modern Woodmen of America

James W. Kimara
Head Clerk

Recd. John Lee.
February 15th 1917



Lincoln.

There are two great epochs in the history of the American Republic. One is the nation-building epoch and the other is the nation-preserving epoch. The first had its scene of action in the midst of the thirteen Colonies on the Atlantic sea-board and its central figure was George Washington. The second epoch had its principal stage of conflict in the Mississippi Valley and its hero was Abraham Lincoln.

We recall the history of the early settlements of Jamestown and Plymouth Rock. We see the growth of thirteen colonies peopled by the liberty-loving Anglo-Saxons. We stand with the throngs in the old town meetings on the commons of Boston and hear the thunder-bolts hurled by Samuel Adams at the tyranny of the British. We again hear the matchless eloquence of Patrick Henry in the halls of the Virginia assembly, and the continental congress. Like mountain peaks loom up the figures of Washington and Franklin. We watch in the morning twilight for the coming of British regulars along the streets in the quiet villages of Lexington and Concord. We stand amid the glories of Bunker Hill and wait with Washington and his barefooted soldiers in the snow at Valley Forge, and applaud his victory at Trenton. We witness Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga and Cornwallis' at Yorktown. We stand in the city of Philadelphia and hear the old liberty bell peal out the birth of liberty upon a new continent; and hear the plaudits of the world at the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence, as penned by the liberty-loving Jefferson. We see a new nation born, dedicated to freedom and constitutional government; created by a people whose forefathers, upon the plains at Runnymede, had wrested from King John the Magna Charta, the bulwark of Anglo-Saxon liberty; a nation that was to exemplify to all history the truth, that all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Nations are not made, they grow. In the beginning of this republic our forefathers left two great questions for future generations to solve. Ideas are things, and it was a contest upon these two great ideas that moulded the bullets that were fired in the civil war. As the teachings of Voltaire and Rousseau culminated in the French Revolution, so the discussion of these two great questions ended only at Appomattox.

The first found an early expression in the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1798 and 1799, inspired by Jefferson. They formulated the contention that the right of the State was above the right of the Federation. Jefferson, the liberty-loving Jefferson, who had just come from under the shadows of monarchy, knew no centralization except the centralization of personal government. He did not fully understand that in a representative government the greatest danger is not in centralization, but in disintegration. He had not come to realize that the greatest tyranny is the tyranny of the chief of a petty tribe, and that in empire there is liberty. That in a great representative

government where all power comes from the people, there is no danger of centralization. Calhoun, as the disciple of Jefferson, carried this idea to its logical conclusion and advocated the right of nullification and secession, and closely connected this question with the other great question of human slavery. This contest brought into action the transcendent eloquence of Daniel Webster, whose defense of the supremacy of our federal government will always be a part of our national history. It found its most dramatic incident when Andrew Jackson faced South Carolina in its nullification and, with uplifted hand, swore by the Eternal that the right of the Federation was above the right of any state. And thus commenced the contest that ended only in civil war.

Here upon the prairies of Illinois more than seventy years ago appeared the first cloud of the impending storm. The death of Lovejoy at Alton battling for the liberty of speech and for human freedom, inspired the oratory of Wendell Phillips upon the commons of Boston, whose words rang out in favor of liberty like the call to battle. His death lent strength to the noble Garrison in Massachusetts. It was with John Brown when he died at Harper's Ferry. It inspired the pen of Horace Greeley, whose words lighted the fires that finally melted away forever the chains of slavery.

In the midst of this storm came the colossal figure of Abraham Lincoln, "the grandest man who has come to us on the tide of time." His origin was as humble as that of the lowly Nazarene who bore his cross on the far-off shores of Gallilee. As a solitary mountain peak towers above the plains, so stood Lincoln above his environments. The centuries will ask of him as they have asked of Shakespeare, from whence came his greatness, and out of the Eternal will come the answer that God gave it.

The first real Americans were those who crossed the Appalachian mountains into the Mississippi Valley. Thus came Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay and thus came the parents of Abraham Lincoln. This host of pioneers from Virginia and the Carolinas into Kentucky and Tennessee and thence into Illinois, made the back-ground for the figure of Lincoln and they were the men in whose midst was fought out the second great American conflict.

The stars shine upon no greater people than those who live here in the valley of the Mississippi river, greater than the Tigris or Euphrates; greater than the Nile, that flowed by the homes of the Ptolemies and Pharaohs, and upon whose banks sit grand, gloomy and peculiar, the everlasting pyramids; greater than the Tiber of ancient Rome, from whose banks the imperial Caesars ruled the world; greater than the Rhine, in whose valley contended the Teuton and the Gaul for the supremacy of Europe and the world; greater than all these because it flows by the home of freemen. And Illinois stretching from the Great Lakes on the north, to the very heart of the Southland, became the keystone of this great valley and here lived and wrought Abraham Lincoln.

“Not without thy wondrous story,
Illinois, Illinois,
Can be writ thy nations glory,
Illinois, Illinois,
On the record of thy years
Abraham Lincoln’s name appears,
Grant and Logan and our tears,
Illinois, Illinois.”

Lincoln was just entering public life as a member of the Illinois Legislature at the formative period of this government. Chief Justice Marshall was yet breathing into our Constitution the breath of a broader National life. Those giants, Webster and Calhoun, were battling over the relation of the states to the Federal government. Webster’s great reply to Hayne was ringing throughout the country like a call to battle. This great epoch built the breast-works behind which the Union soldiers fought from 1861 to ’65. Lincoln caught the inspiration of the times and he believed with Washington and Hamilton that the right of the Federation was above the right of any state. These great statesmen were aristocrats but Lincoln was one of the people and put into practice what Jefferson taught in theory—equality of all men before the law. Without being an aristocrat, Lincoln believed in the supremacy of the national government. Believing in the equality of men, he denied Jefferson’s doctrine of state sovereignty. Lincoln became the champion and embodiment of two great American ideas—liberty and national supremacy. He was a great admirer and follower of Henry Clay and believed in the doctrine of a protective tariff and other great Whig principles which were inherited by the Republican party and which have finally come to be the belief of a Nation.

Lincoln was a politician in the truest and best sense of the term. A statesman understands the theory of government and a politician the practice of government. Lincoln was both a statesman and a politician. There can be no successful government without party, and no successful party without organization and no organization without politicians. When Lincoln was a member of the Illinois Legislature he joined in a combination with eight others which became known as the “Long Nine.” These members were from Sangamon County and became the early disciples of that principle of “log-rolling” by which they voted for every measure by which they could trade for votes for the removal of the State Capital from Vandalia to Springfield. Lincoln thus became the head and front of one of the most marked log-rolling schemes known to Illinois history and he was successful. As a politician he was always fair and honorable and never struck below the belt.

Lincoln’s great power with the people lay in the strength of his expression. His words were as easily understood by the people amongst whom he lived as the call of the bird to its mate. As true to nature as the roar of the wild beast or the gentle murmur of falling waters. His thought and speech was as direct as the lightning and his humor as gentle and wholesome as the laughter of a little child. His Gettysburg speech and his inaugural addresses are unexcelled classics.

The hour having struck, the great stage ready, and the man come, the curtain rises upon the debates between the "Little Giant," Stephen A. Douglas and the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. Here in Illinois with her prairies so open that truth could find no hiding place, the people listened to the immortal words of Lincoln in that great debate and they caught the inspiration of liberty. The torch was lighted and the fire of freedom spread throughout the length and breadth of the land.

When Lincoln appeared at the great meeting at Cooper Institute, New York, he was practically unknown in the East. He arrived hurriedly from a late train and appeared dusty and ill-attired. His gaunt body was covered with ill-fitting clothes; the sleeves of his coat were short and his trousers came nearly to his knees. The Chairman, ashamed of his appearance, threw him at the meeting like you would throw a boot-jack at a cat. He said: "Ladies and Gentlemen, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois." Then Lincoln spake as never man spoke before, on this great question of human slavery. With a logic as incisive as steel, he analyzed this great question from the making of the Constitution up to that time. His words were as mellow as the cadences of the Kalavalla. Here his great power of direct speech illuminated the question as it had never been illumed before. When he had concluded his masterly effort the cultured East had bowed down in homage to the simple pioneer that the West had already lifted up on its shoulders. Years afterwards, Mr. Lincoln told a friend that at this meeting for the first time he thought that one day he might become President of the United States.

Bunker Hill, Saratoga and Yorktown made us free from the tyranny of kings but it was not until the boys in blue marched with Grant to Appomattox and the Emancipation Proclamation came from the hands of Lincoln like the voice of God into the grave of Lazarus, were all of our people absolutely free. Then for the first time were the theories of the Declaration of Independence made absolute facts.

Then the storm which had been gathering for more than half a century broke with all its fury and violence. The first gun fired on Fort Sumpter was the voice of destiny calling on the young republic to do battle for its life. No great army was in the field to answer to the challenge. It was not to be a mortal combat between the equipped and mobilized armies of two great foreign powers; but under the dark cloud of impending war, loyal citizens asked themselves "Would the nation die," or "would the nation live?" By their firesides, with prattling children upon their knees, with the tearful eyes of wives upon them, men sought to resolve their duty. The call was answered from the plow, the workshop, the hill and dale, from country and city the people flocked to arms.

"They came as the waves come when armies are landed,
They came as the winds come when navies are stranded."

And above the thunder of the muttering storm was heard the voice of a lion-hearted people, crying to their leader:

"We are coming, Father Abraham, one hundred thousand strong."

You have read of those days—how the firing on Fort Sumpter aroused the patriotism of the people. You have read of the news of the defeats at Bull Run and Chancellorsville; how the splendid army of the Potomac wasted with disease and inaction. Then it belonged to the soldiers from the cornfields of the west to look, with Grant, into the fiery mouths of the cannon at Fort Donnelson, and give to a faltering cause the courage of a great victory gained. It was their stubborn courage that changed defeat into victory at Shiloh. They waited with Grant in front of Vicksburg until that place gave way before their grim determination. And then came the glorious news of Gettysburg; how Meade threw shrapnel into the ranks of Lee's defeated legions. You have read of Logan at Atlanta; how after McPherson had fallen he rode to the front with his long, black hair streaming in the breeze, his eyes flashing, his sword drawn, that caught its brightness from the princely gleaming of his soul, "a mailed warrior, a plumed knight," who plucked victory from defeat, even at the cannon's mouth, and with the ferocity of a tiger, compelled submission from bended knees. There may have been better trained generals, but there never was a braver soldier than John A. Logan. He was the hero volunteer soldier of that war.

Then Grant, who never lost a battle, joined in the last death struggle with Lee in the Wilderness; and then was heard the glad acclaim of the people, when the bottom dropped out of armed rebellion upon the field of Appomattox.

The soldiers from the cornfields of the west joined in the grand review at Washington, marching down the streets of the National Capital, cheered by all Christendom. And no braver, better soldiers ever formed the phalanx of Caesar or followed the eagles of Napoleon.

Then was lifted into the forum of the constitution to shine forever and ever like a star, the great principle of equality of all men before the law. Then the shackles fell from four million slaves and they were lifted from chattels to the rights of American citizenship. Then the Mississippi in its joyous march to the gulf, and from the gulf to the sea, told no story of Missouri, sang no song of Illinois. In it was not heard the name of any state, but in that ceaseless murmur between two great oceans was heard a grand anthem to the American Republic; in it was heard the voice of a nation proclaiming the will of the people. It now flows by the home of no slave and no bondsman.

Through the blood and tears and suffering of that great war, there was breathed into this nation the breath of a broader national life. Human slavery was abolished, state sovereignty was dead, and the liberty of thought, of speech, and of publication were established.

Standing with a new generation today, looking back, we see the clouds of war lifting. We see our republic entering upon a career of progress unequalled in the history of nations, and yet in the forenoon of its greatness. Seeing all these things, remembering the precious price that has been paid for this heritage, let us not forget the words of the immortal Lincoln as he stood upon the famous field of Gettysburg: "Here let us highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain;

that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom and that the government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth."

The time honored saying that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country was not true of Mr. Lincoln. The people amongst whom he lived all loved, revered and honored him. What he said and did and was when in their midst they have cherished as the Hebrew tribes the tradition of Abraham, and dying, have bequeathed them as a rich legacy to their children.

There is no more pathetic scene in all history than when upon his departure to assume the duties of Chief Magistrate of the great nation on the eve of impending war his home people gathered to bid him a last farewell, and to offer their prayers to God for his safety. In that dark hour he reached out to touch the hand of his people like a little child in the darkness reaches out to touch the hand of its mother. He sprang from the common people and in all his sorrows and battles their touch gave him strength and courage, as the touch of Mother Earth gave strength and victory to Antaeos of old.

On this Centennial Anniversary the people of Springfield and of Illinois with one mind and one heart join with all the people of this Republic in paying a loving tribute to Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln and America—names as inseparable and as immortal in history as the names of Alexander and Greece, of Caesar and Rome, of Napoleon and France.

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